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LETTER: U.S. Sugar deal serves Everglades, economy

11/04/2009

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Palm Beach Post

DREW MARTIN

Despite opposition like that from the Sugar Cane Growers Cooperative of Florida, it makes sense to purchase land from U.S. Sugar Corp. for restoration of the Florida Everglades.

Biscayne Bay and Everglades National Park need the restoration of water flow from a restored Everglades ecosystem. At the same time, polluted water would be cleaned. Right now, this water is being released to our estuaries and is damaging fish and other wildlife. This pollution is potentially costing us more than \$1 billion in economic damage by killing fish and reducing real estate values along our coasts. Restoration of the Everglades ecosystem would prevent this environmental damage.

The ultimate goal is to protect the environment and maintain our economy. Let's move forward on Everglades restoration for the good of our economy and the environment.

DREW MARTIN, chairman

Everglades Committee, Sierra Club

Feds approve key Everglades restoration project

11/04/2009

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Sun Sentinel

Reid, Andy

Long-stalled Everglades restoration took a welcome step forward as the Army Corps of Engineers today announced the approval of a construction contract to turn a failed development back to its natural state.

The \$53 million Picayune Strand project in Collier County becomes the first federally funded construction project in the state and federal Everglades restoration plan that has struggled to make progress since 2000. Everglades restoration is a multibillion-dollar effort to build reservoirs and treatment areas to recreate the water flows that once naturally replenished the River of Grass.

Picayune Strand includes 55,000 acres between Alligator Alley and Tamiami Trail in southwest Florida, surrounded by preserves and Everglades National Park.

The federal work, to begin next month, involves plugging 13.5 miles of drainage canals, removing 95 miles of roads and building a pump station to redirect water, according to the corps.

The corps announced today that it awarded the work, expected to take two years, to Harry Pepper and Associates of Jacksonville.

About \$40 million of the price tag will be covered by federal economic stimulus money, which helped speed up the construction timetable.

"The reclamation of Picayune Strand will be a case study in realizing the positive economic and environmental benefits of restoration," Kirk Fordham, CEO of the Everglades Foundation, said in a statement released Wednesday.

While waiting for federal help, the South Florida Water Management District in recent years has already been at work on Picayune Strand, clearing out exotic plants, plugging northern sections of the Prairie Canal and removing roadways.

Giving an additional boost to Everglades restoration, the district last month approved a \$44 million contract for the C-111 project to start repairing environmental damage caused by a 15-mile-long canal in southern Miami-Dade County.

In addition, the district is pursuing a \$536 million land deal with U.S. Sugar Corp. to buy 73,000 acres, much of it in Palm Beach County, to use to build reservoirs and treatment areas.

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